

Holmes-Biddle Land Grant: Miramar

BY MONTY HEALY

In 1627, Myles Standish's assistant, Lt. William Holmes, was granted 30 acres and three acres of salt meadow. As a bachelor he was entitled to 20 acres in the 1627 Plymouth 2nd Division, in which every man woman and child, except servants, received 20 acres. The extra acreage provided to Holmes may be due to his service to the Colony. In the same division Joseph Biddle, a carpenter from Marshfield, who was a respected man in the community and held several public positions, was granted 30 acres immediately to the north of Lt. Holmes. Here again, we see a variance from the normal 20 acres. Joseph married the widow Rachell Dean, who had a daughter, Martha Dean. Possibly Joseph had not yet married by 1627, but by the time they got around to setting off the parcel he had, so they gave him the extra 10 acres. That is speculation on my part. Joseph did buy a 10-acre parcel from his neighbor to the north, Isaac Robinson. These properties became one parcel a short time later when both pieces, comprising 70 acres plus five acres of salt meadow, were transferred to Abraham Pierce, Sr. What details we have about these exchanges were in the story that ran in the Duxbury Clipper Dec. 24, 2014.

The Pilgrims believed that the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England had both strayed beyond Christ's teachings. The issue with the Catholics was increasing Roman influence, sometimes referred to as "popery."

The Pilgrim separation from the Anglican Church influenced Christian religion in New England for many years. It was not until the large increase in immigration from places like Italy and Ireland that the Catholic Religion grew in this area. I find it somewhat ironic that a Catholic Missionary School ended up on a Pilgrim Land Grant. An "interfaith council" working its magic in the early 1900s?

In 1875 Father Arnold Janssen founded the Society of the Divine Word (Societas Verbi Divini in Latin). SVD is the largest Catholic order of priests and brothers devoted to missionary work. Father Janssen, a German priest, built the SVD's first house, called St. Michaels, in Steyl, Holland near the bank of the Meuse River, which is the border between Germany and Holland. At the time the Prussian government in Germany was carrying on a campaign to control the Catholic Church and it would have been nearly impossible to build his new house on German soil. It wasn't until 1909 that Father Janssen gave permission to open a mission in America, St. Mary's in Techny, Illinois. Three years later another mission house followed in Girard, Pa. Ten years after that (1922) The St. Francis Xavier Mission House was opened in the Boston Archdiocese at Island Creek in Duxbury.

Father Janssen and one of his earliest missionary graduates, Joseph Freinademetz were both canonized as saints on Oct. 5, 2003 by Pope John Paul, II.

The property was purchased by the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Boston in 1911 from Nancy S. Parks for \$1 "and other valuable considerations," which may have been \$50,000. The property

was named Miramar (view of the sea) by Cardinal William O'Connell. Although it has been said that this was the Cardinal's summer home, that is doubtful. In those early years the complex served as a summer home for workingclass girls from Boston, under the watchful eyes of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

From 1922 to 1957 the buildings served as the SVD High School (and junior college) for boys who sought to be future missionaries. It was during this time that the boys were able to enjoy swimming in the Miramar pond (see photo). This was, of course, prior to the Percy Walker Pool, about 1938. If you go to Facebook and join "You Know You Are From Duxbury When...." You can read all the comments from residents who knew about the Miramar pond.

SVD served as a two-year college from 1958 to 1965 and was later associated with Massasoit College (1965-1970). All the while, the Miramar buildings have been used as a retreat center from 1948 to today – 66 years. Much of the above information is gathered from the Miramar Pamphlet about the high school and from the story written by Father Joseph Connolly and others on the Miramar web-site.

Part of the property, in the Parks Street area, was sold in 1982 for the Bay Farm Condominium. That sale included the Samuel Loring mansion. The money raised from that sale was used to expand the wing of the Retreat Center.



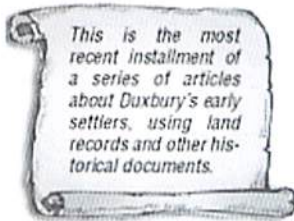
Samuel Loring mansion, circled. Miramar Pond, below.



Miramar Retreat Center, as expanded, 1982.



BY LAMONT "MONTY" HEALTY



This is the most recent installment of a series of articles about Duxbury's early settlers, using land records and other historical documents.